some time in front of the register with his back to me. When the servers returned, he hurried away, almost knocking them down."

The Duke was listening intently and she paused for breath before she continued: "I thought he looked a surprisingly rough, unpleasant sort of man to be a priest, and when he appeared in Signor Vecchio's office, he shouted in Italian: 'I've found it! I've found it!"

The Duke looked puzzled. "You say you saw this man, Father Sebastian, in the Cathedral," he said. "Then he came into Vecchio's office. That seems unlikely."

"It was him! I am sure it was the same man!" Luella said. "Signor Vecchio quickly said in Italian: 'Look out! We are not alone', and hurried him out of the room."

"Then what happened?" the Duke enquired.

"I was alone for some time," Luella answered, "then Signor Vecchio came back and suggested that I take Enrico to England."

The Duke drew in his breath. "I am beginning to understand how it was all worked out," he said. "Vecchio must have learned that I had become the Duke of Ingatestone."

"He knew about you. He told me he had read of the disaster to your family in the Italian newspapers."

The Duke nodded. "And when Tia died, he knew this was his opportunity to make a great deal of money by pretending the child was mine."

"I felt it was odd when we picked him up from a poor-looking house," Luella said. "Signor Vecchio

told me to wait in the carriage when he went inside to collect the little boy. He had said that Tia was so charming and popular that everyone had wept at her funeral. I thought it strange that she should be living in such a hovel."

"It may be her child, it may not," the Duke said. "It could be that Vecchio merely found a weapon with which to blackmail me."

"It should be easy to find that out," Luella said.

The Duke gave a laugh that had no humour in it. "That may be true, but, knowing Vecchio, he will have covered his tracks. He is a past-master at intrigue, and of course at blackmail! I was warned about him by everyone I met in Italy."

He sighed before he said: "They admitted however that his 'houses' were comparable to the very best in Paris, and the girls whom he obtained from many different countries were superior to anything that could be found anywhere else in Europe!"

"Can you not prove that the marriage certificate is a . . forgery?" Luella asked.

The Duke was still holding it in his hand and now he looked down at it. "It has been very skilfully done by an expert, I should imagine, who of course will be well known to Vecchio."

"I . . I must have . . seen him!" Luella exclaimed.

"What do you mean?" the Duke asked.

"We were waiting at the hotel next to the station, and we got there far too early, which seemed to me strange."

She paused a moment to think, and then said: "A man came into the room and Signor Vecchio was